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ABSTRACT

Fifty-two University of Maryland, College Park campus police officers were administered the Personal History Index, the California Psychological Inventory, the Press Test, the Test of Social Insight, the Situational Attitude Scale, the Dogmatism Scale, and the California F scale. These predictors were related to the following performance criteria, using step-wise multiple regression and Pearson correlation at the .05 level: tenure, most commendations, most reprimands, most absenteeism, "ideal" officer, most promotions, highest peer rating, highest self-rating, and highest supervisor rating. Results indicated that statistically significant predictions were possible on all criteria, but that each criterion was associated with different, sometimes opposite characteristics. For instance, those with the highest peer ratings tended to be authoritarian, while those with the most commendations were not. Other findings included negative racial attitudes being associated with most commendations, "ideal" officer, most promotions, and highest supervisor ratings. Potential explanations and implications of these and other results are discussed. Ultimately a decision on the performance characteristics considered most important must be made so that officers meeting those requirements can be selected. (Author)

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COUNSELING CENTER
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CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL CAMPUS POLICE OFFICERS

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Research Report # 10-74

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The varied duties of a police officer require a myriad of abilities and skills. The campus police officer apparently not only needs the skills of any officer, but must also possess the characteristics which enable him or her to perform in a young, multiracial, highly intelligent, active and outspoken population.

There appears to be little or no available research on exactly what predictors and criteria could be best employed to select campus police officers, and how best to measure them. The purpose of this study was to investigate such variables in a university setting.

Since the early 1900's, most police departments have included general aptitude or I.Q. tests in addition to the usual application form, interview, background investigation and successful completion of a Police Academy in the selection of officers (Chenoweth, 1961; Colarelli and Siegel, 1964; Dubois and Watson, 1950; Holmes, 1941; Marsh, 1962; Mills, 1969; Narrol and Levitt, 1963). Narrol and Levitt (1963) point out, however, that many of the tests that intend to measure police aptitude are really nothing more than general intelligence tests.

Due to the increased pressures and demands on the present day officer to react quickly and correctly with emotional stability, and due to the development of psychological tests that can predict behavior and performance in many situations, there is a demand for the additional use of these tests (Baehr, Furcon and Froemel, 1968; Hooke and Kraus, 1971; Mirich, 1959; Symonds, 1970).

Some feel that even psychological and emotional screening of prospective recruits by trained psychiatrists is worth the financial cost (Oglesby, 1957). Situational tests are often recommended as the best way to tap the motivational, emotional, and personality dimensions needed by the present day officer (Mills, McDevitt and Tonkin, 1966; Mills, 1969).

A procedure involving selecting tests, evaluating performance, interrelating the tests and performance, perdicting performance, and checking the validity of the predictions has been recommended by Colarelli and Siegel (1964) and Baehr et al. (1968). One of the problems is the operational definition of "performance," which is the criterion variable. Criteria that have been used include grades in the Police Academy (Dubois and Watson, 1950; Mills, et al., 1966), observations of performance of duty (Chenoweth, 1961), ratings by supervisors of on-the-job performance (Marsh, 1962), tenure (Baehr, et al., 1968; Marsh, 1962), accident rate (Marsh, 1962), failure (termination of service for reasons other than death or retirement) (Levy, 1967), marksmanship (Dubois and Watson, 1950), service rating after 10 weeks on the job (Dubois and Watson, 1950), paired-comparison rating (Baehr, et al., 1968), and personnel records (arrests, awards, complaints, years of service, and disciplinary actions (Baehr, et al., 1968). Many studies use a combination of the above criteria.

In summary, with the exception of the Baehr et al. (1968) study, there is a lack of research into the prediction and validation of tests used in police selection procedures, although a definite need in this area is recognized.

Method

Subjects

Fifty-two of 59 campus officers at the University of Maryland, College Park were administered a series of measures, and job performance information was obtained on each one by the University Counseling Center. The seven officers were missed because of illness, vacation or incomplete data. The mean educational level of the officers was 13.3 years, and 84% were male and 84% were white. All officers were informed in writing by the Director of Public Safety, and orally by researchers, that the results would be kept confidential by the Counseling Center, that the Director of Public Safety would receive only summary data, and that there would be no negative consequences to them in the study.

Predictors

The officers were administered the Personal History Index (PHI, Baehr et al., 1968), the California Psychological Inventory (CPI, Gough, 1957), the Press test (PT, Baehr et al., 1968), the Test of Social Insight (SI, Cassell, 1963), the Situational Attitude Scale Form B (SAS, Sedlacek and Brooks 1972), the Dogmatism Scale (D, Rokeach, 1960) and the California F scale (F, Adorno, et al., 1950). Additional predictors employed were education level, sex, race and age.

Criteria

The performance measures (criteria) predicted were: tenure, most commendations, most reprimands, most absenteeism, ratings by top supervisors of closeness to the "ideal" officer, paired comparison peer ratings, and a self and immediate supervisor rating on the same checklist form.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using step-wise multiple regression and zero order Pearson correlation. Equations were double-cross validated using split samples and all statistical significance reported was at the .05 level.

Results

Generally the officers scored in the average or normal range on all the predictors. However, the purpose of the study was to identify which combination of variables best predicted successful performance on each criterion.

Table 1 shows that it was possible to get significant (.05) predictions of all criteria. The muliple correlations (R's) range from .60 to .94, with a median of .79. The cross-validated multiple R's range from .16 to .90, with a median of .54, indicating reasonable stability in the predictions.

Table 2 indicates the intercorrelations among the criteria. The criteria were both positively and negatively correlated with one another. The most positively correlated criteria were supervisor rating and "ideal" officer (.77), and the most negatively correlated criteria were tenure and "ideal" officer (-.54).

Table 3 shows the characteristics associated with success on each of the criterion measures. These are taken from the first three variables entered into the regression equation predicting each criterion. The characteristics associated with each criterion vary considerably, and in many cases indicate opposing traits. For instance those with the highest peer ratings tended to be authoritarian, while those with the most commendations were not.

Discussion

Perhaps the most striking feature in the study is the differing results obtained with each criterion. The issue of what we call "good performance" and what we wish to have in a campus police force must be faced directly. The implication is that if we choose one criterion, say the "ideal" officer as judged by supervisors, we would tend to select someone much different than those admired by their peers. So every school must make it's own decision; but whatever criterion is used, the implications of that choice must be considered. Of course the applicability of these data to other schools must be tested before any overall conclusions are possible.

An important result was that negative racial attitudes were associated with those officers who got the most commendations, those closest to the "ideal" officer, those who get the most promotions, and those with the highest supervisor ratings. The most obvious explanation for the results is that negative racial attitudes are being reinforced on the campus police force. However, alternative explanations are possible.

For instance, it may be that those who make the best officers do have more negative feelings, if their performance is measured against the many duties they have which are not related to racial matters. It is also possible that an artifact appeared in the measurement of racial attitudes. Perhaps those with the least positive attitudes actually altered their responses to make themselves look good, whereas those with the most positive attitudes tended to answer honestly and in comparison looked more negative. It should be added that the SAS was designed to avoid the problem of giving faked responses, and that it has worked successfully for many other groups.

Additionally, while the above is a possible explanation it violates one of the basic laws of science: parsimony. Applying parsimony to the results means we do not accept a complicated explanation when a simple one will do. It is a very complicated explanation to postulate that sub groups responded differentially based on other than their true feelings. However, the explanation could be a combination of several other effects, such as that five blacks completed the SAS and the instrument was designed to measure attitudes of whites toward blacks, or that officers indicated their names on the form. Thus, while there are no decisive explanations for the racial attitude results and further research is necessary, the potential negative implications of the results must be considered.

The information is being fed back into a training program which will in part emphasize race relations. Here is a good example of a group (campus officers) which may play a critical role in the overall race relations climate on campus, but which is often forgotten by personnel administrators and program planners. A method of approaching race relations training has been developed at Maryland and is regularly used in a varity of settings on and off campus (Sedlacek, 1974; Sedlacek & Brooks, 1975).

The great difference among the self, peer and supervisor ratings has important implications for policy and program development. When the study results were discussed with some members of the campus police force several expressed interest in the fact that not all members of the force were working toward the same ends. While this is true to some extent in any group, training sessions focusing directly on this issue appear to be called for.

This brings us back to the central point: we must decide on the performance characteristics of the campus force we want; only then can we properly select people to succeed on those criteria. It would be inappropriate to select those predictors we feel are "good without relating them to a standard of performance.

TABLE 1

Cross Validation of the Best Predictors of Each Criterion

CRITERION	NO. OF PREDICTORS*	SAMPLE 1			SAMPLE 2		
		R^2	R**	CROSS R	R^2	R**	CROSS R
Tenure	4	.58	.76	.69	.85	.92	.90
Most Commendations	8	.61	.78	.39	.62	.78	.30
Most Reprimands	9	.76	.88	.63	.89	.94	.85
Most Absenteeism	5	.73	.85	.39	.40	.64	.16
"Ideal" officer	6	.48	.69	.53	.54	.73	.57
Most Promotions	7	.66	.81	.71	.65	.80	.67
Highest Peer Rating	7	.81	.90	.82	.36	.60	.54
Highest Self Rating	7	.53	.73	.54	.51	.71	.44
Highest Supervisor Rating	9	.72	.85	.64	.62	.79	.55

* Step-wise regression terminated when R increased by less than .02
** All R's significant at .05 except for Highest Peer Rating in sample 2.

TABLE 2

Intercorrelations of Criteria for Each Sample[a] in the Cross Validation

	Tenure	Most Commendations	Most Reprimands	Most Absenteeism	"Ideal" Officer	Most Promotions	Highest Peer Rating	Highest Self Rating	Highest Supervisor Rating
Tenure		-.05	.09	-.17	-.22	.21	.19	-.13	-.11
Most Commendations	-.28		-.28	-.13	.05	.45	.38	.04	.07
Most Reprimands	.24	-.16		.09	.01	-.25	.09	-.10	-.11
Most Absenteeism	.29	-.06	-.12		.07	-.19	-.11	.01	.04
"Ideal" Officer	-.54	.32	-.29	-.31		.21	.36	.19	.77
Most Promotions	.44	.03	.31	.54	-.09		.67	.01	.41
Highest Peer Rating	-.04	.29	-.12	.53	.22	.47		.05	.46
Highest Self Rating	-.42	.42	-.29	.02	-.02	-.33	-.04		.--
Highest Supervisor Rating	-.40	.26	-.18	-.32	.74	.00	.32	-.10	

[a]Sample 1 is above the diagonal; sample 2 below the diagonal.

TABLE 3

Characteristics of Successful Campus Police Officers

CRITERION	ASSOCIATED CHARACTERISTICS*
Tenure	older, financially responsible, not interested in family activities
Most Commendations	not authoritarian, negative racial attitudes, interested in and responsive to others
Most Reprimands	not interested in family activities, racial attitudes unclear, high on drive
Most Absenteeism	female, low on dominance, interested in family activities
"Ideal" Officer	interested in change and development, negative racial attitudes, makes a good impression
Most Promotions	financially responsible, negative racial attitudes, black
Highest Peer Rating	masculine personality, authoritarian, low on poise and self confidence
Highest Self Rating	low drive, black, positive racial attitudes
Highest Supervisor Rating	makes a good impression, authoritarian, negative racial attitudes

* Taken from the first three predictors in the regression equation for each criterion.

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